

Gov. Peter Shumlin and Vermont's Congressional delegation announced tonight that federal aid would become available to Vermont homeowners and renters in seven counties hardest hit by this spring's flooding. In addition, public assistance to help pay for road, bridge and infrastructure repair will also be forthcoming in those counties.

The Governor and Vermont's Congressional delegation received notice of federal approval from the White House and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The counties are Addison, Chittenden, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Orleans. Three other counties -- Washington, Caledonia and Windham -- are still under review. The Governor, Sens. Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders, and Rep. Peter Welch said they are hopeful those counties will receive disaster assistance approval quickly.

Gov. Shumlin requested the assistance under a Major Federal Disaster Declaration, which was issued by President Barack Obama after a review of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's analysis of both the request and flood damage for those counties most impacted by the storms.

"This is good news for Vermont. While not the full request we sought, this assistance, in combination with other federal and state loan and grant options, will go a long way toward helping Vermont recover from this flooding crisis," Gov. Shumlin said. "I want to thank our outstanding Congressional delegation -- Sens. Leahy and Sanders, and Rep. Welch -- for their tireless advocacy for Vermont during this process. Thanks also to President Obama and his administration for recognizing the severity of the flooding and its impact on Vermonters."

In a joint statement, the members of Vermont's congressional delegation -- Sen. Patrick Leahy (D), Sen. Bernie Sanders (I), and Representative Peter Welch (D) -- said: "Countless hours and tremendous amounts of work have gone into producing and turning around Vermont's application for flood relief. At every step of this process, and working closely with Governor Shumlin, we have taken Vermont's strong case for swift and substantive relief to the President, FEMA and all other federal decision makers, and we appreciate the cooperation and understanding that we have found at every turn."

They pledged to continue that effort for Washington, Caledonia and Windham Counties.

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) said, "I am grateful that President Obama has taken this step so federal agencies can work shoulder-to-shoulder with Vermonters in the ordeal of cleaning up and rebuilding. We now have a charter for the federal role in building back from the heavy toll these floods have taken on Vermont's families, businesses and community life. This disaster declaration is both an outline and an authorization, and we will work together in bringing these promises to life. The burdens that Vermonters face in rebuilding their lives will be heavy, even with these federal resources. It has been so encouraging to have all hands on deck since the flood waters arrived. Close partnerships at all government levels and in the private sector have stayed strong and are making a difference. This kind of teamwork will be needed for months to come as we pull together during Vermont's recovery."

"This assistance will help Vermonters rebuild and recover from the severe damage caused by the worst spring floods in generations," said Sen. Bernie Sanders. "Senator Leahy and Congressman Welch and I are glad to have worked hand in glove with Governor Shumlin to get all the help from Washington that Vermonters need and deserve."

"This much-needed assistance will help Vermonters get back on their feet after the devastating storms of the past two months," Rep. Peter Welch said. "With such severe damage to many parts of the state, the rebuilding process is just beginning. I look forward to working with Governor Shumlin, as well as Senators Leahy and Sanders, to ensure the assistance is getting to where it is needed as quickly as possible."

The President's action makes Individual Assistance (IA) Programs available to affected homeowners and renters in those seven counties. It also avails businesses, homeowners and renters to low-interest loans from the Small Business Administration.

The available Individual Assistance Programs administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Small Business Administration (SBA) include funds for Individuals and Households Programs (IHP), Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Crisis Counseling, Legal Assistance, Tax Relief, and Small Business Administration Disaster Loans. This assistance will help individuals and businesses in their recovery from the impacts of flooding.

Individuals and business owners who sustained losses in the designated counties, can initiate

the application for assistance process by calling the FEMA tele-registration numbers: 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-800-462-7585 (TTY) for the hearing and speech impaired or registering on-line at www.fema.gov. The toll-free tele-registration numbers will operate from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m., seven days a week, until further notice.

Municipalities in Addison, Caledonia, Chittenden, Essex, Franklin, Lamoille and Orleans Counties also qualify for reimbursement under the Public Assistance declaration. Those communities will receive 75 percent reimbursement for all response and recovery costs associated with storms and floods that began April 23.